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LOSS OF THE KENT.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A NARRATIVE

OF THE

LOSS OF THE KENT,

BY FIRE,

IN

THE BAY OF BISCAY,

ON THE FIRST OF MARCH, 1825.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND,

BY A PASSENGER.

Sir Duncan McGregor
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INTRODUCTION.

The following narrative was written by a Major in the East India Company's service. It has not, it is believed, been previously published entire, in the United States. It is reprinted *verbatim* from the original, and presented in a form adapted for general circulation.

This narrative exhibits the various and imminent perils to which they are exposed, who "go down to the sea in ships;" and it displays, amongst "the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep," his signal interposition for their deliverance. It affords example of the noble spirit of seamen, which prompts them to rescue the lives of their fellow-men, at the hazard of their own. It

presents to our view the magnanimous demeanor of military officers, and the no less gallant bearing of subordinates, at the moment when all human distinctions of rank appeared about to cease forever. We have here exhibited heroic fortitude, in the female bosom; the tenderest charities of domestic life, in lively exercise; and the most touching instances of self-abandonment and devotedness to others, in every class. Above all else, we here behold the power of our divine religion to sustain the Christian calm, collected, confiding, and secure, on occasions, when, such as are devoid of its principles and influence, abandon themselves to senseless stupor, or frantic despair. In brief, we know not, if, within the compass of the same number of pages, we have seen presented, in real life, so great variety and so rapid succession of uncommon incidents, accompanied by as striking and varied a development of human character. This tale is adapted to call into exercise the best sympathies of our nature, and is replete with most valuable instruction.

It is commended to the perusal of naval men, of youth, and of the public generally.

May the most benign influence be diffused, through the medium of this little volume. May it, especially, tend to excite interest for the Mariner, and induce prayer and action to convey to his bosom the purity, peace, and trust, the hopes, and joys, which flow from faith in the Son of God.

NARRATIVE

OF THE

LOSS OF THE KENT.

With the twofold view of gratifying the lively interest excited in the minds of our friends, by the awful and afflicting calamity that has lately befallen the "Kent" East Indiaman, and of humbly recording the signal interposition of that God, "who, in the midst of judgment remembereth mercy," I am induced to transmit to you—to be disposed of as you may think fit—the following detailed account of the melancholy event, which has at once deprived the country of many valuable lives, and thereby plunged numerous families into the deepest distress; and involved, I fear, in pecuniary ruin, or reduced to extreme embarrassment, most of the gallant survivors.

You are aware that the Kent, Captain Henry Cobb, a fine new ship of 1350 tons, bound to

Bengal and China, left the Downs on the 19th of February, with 20 officers, 344 soldiers, 43 women, and 66 children, belonging to the 31st regiment; with 20 private passengers, and a crew (including officers) of 148 men on board.

The bustle attendant on a departure for India, is undoubtedly calculated to subdue the force of those deeply painful sensations to which few men can refuse to yield, in the immediate prospect of a long and distant separation from the land of their fondest and earliest recollections. With my gallant shipmates, indeed, whose elasticity of spirits is remarkably characteristic of the professions to which they belonged, hope appeared greatly to predominate over sadness. Surrounded as they were by every circumstance that could render their voyage propitious, and in the ample enjoyment of every necessary that could contribute either to their health or comfort,—their hearts seemed to beat high with contentment and gratitude towards that country which they zealously served, and whose interests they were cheerfully going forth to defend.

With a fine fresh breeze from the north-east, the stately Kent, in bearing down the channel, speedily passed many a well-known spot on the

coast, dear to our remembrance; and on the evening of the 23d, we took our last view of happy England, and entered the wide Atlantic, without the expectation of again seeing land until we reached the shores of India.

With slight interruptions of bad weather, we continued to make way, until the night of Monday, the 28th, when we were suddenly arrested in lat. 47° 30′, long. 10°, by a violent gale from the south-west, which gradually increased during the whole of the following morning.

To those who have never "gone down to the sea in ships, and seen the wonders of the Lord in the great deep," or even to such as have never been exposed in a westerly gale to the tremendous swell in the Bay of Biscay, I am sensible that the most sober description of the magnificent spectacle of "watery hills in full succession flowing," would appear sufficiently exaggerated. But it is impossible, I think, for the inexperienced mariner, however unreflecting he may try to be, to view the effects of the increasing storm, as he feels his solitary vessel reeling to and fro under his feet, without involuntarily raising his thoughts, with a secret confession of helplessness and veneration that he may never before have experi-

enced, towards that mysterious Being, whose power, under ordinary circumstances, we may entirely disregard, and whose incessant goodness we are too prone to requite with ingratitude.

The activity of the officers and seamen of the Kent appeared to keep ample pace with that of the gale. Our larger sails were speedily taken in, or closely reefed; and about ten o'clock on the morning of the 1st of March, after having struck our top-gallant yards, we were lying to, under a triple-reefed main top-sail only, with our dead lights in, and with the whole watch of soldiers attached to the life-lines, that were run along the deck for this purpose.

The rolling of the ship, which was vastly increased by a dead weight of some hundred tons of shot and shells that formed a part of its lading, became so great about half-past eleven or twelve o'clock, that our main-chains were thrown by every lurch considerably under water; and the best cleated articles of furniture in the cabins and the *cuddy* were dashed about with so much noise and violence, as to excite the liveliest apprehensions of individual danger.

It was a little before this period that one of the officers of the ship, with the well-meant in-

tention of ascertaining that all was fast below, descended with two of the sailors into the hold, where they carried with them, for safety, a light in the patent lantern; and seeing that the lamp burned dimly, the officer took the precaution to hand it up to the orlop deck to be trimmed. Having afterwards discovered one of the spirit casks to be adrift, he sent the sailors for some billets of wood to secure it; but the ship in their absence having made a heavy lurch, the officer unfortunately dropped the light; and letting go his hold of the cask in his eagerness to recover the lantern, it suddenly stove, and the spirits communicating with the lamp, the whole place was instantly in a blaze.

I know not what steps were then taken; but having received the alarming information that the ship was on fire in the after-hold, I hastened to the hatchway, whence smoke was slowly ascending, and where Captain Cobb and other officers were giving orders, which were promptly obeyed by the seamen and troops, who used every exertion by means of the pumps, buckets of water, wet sails, hammocks, &c. to extinguish the flames. Finding, however, that the devouring element was rapidly spreading, and

that volumes of smoke were issuing from all the four hatchways, Captain Cobb, with an ability and decision of character that seemed to increase with the imminence of the danger, resorted to the only alternative now left him, of ordering the lower decks to be scuttled, the combings of the hatches to be cut, and the lower ports to be opened, for the free admission of the watery element.

These instructions were speedily executed by the united efforts of the troops and seamen; but not before some of the sick soldiers, one woman, and several children, unable to gain the upper deck, had perished. On descending to the gun deck with Colonel Fearon, Captain Bray, and one or two other officers of the 31st regiment, to assist in opening the ports, I met, staggering towards the hatchway, in an exhausted and nearly senseless state, one of the mates, who informed us that he had just stumbled over the dead bodies of some individuals who must have died from suffocation, to which it was evident that he himself had almost fallen a victim. So dense and oppressive was the smoke, that it was with the utmost difficulty we could remain long enough below to fulfil Captain Cobb's wishes;

which were no sooner accomplished, than the sea rushed in with extraordinary force, carrying away, in its resistless progress to the hold, the largest chests, bulk-heads, &c.

Such a sight, under any other conceivable circumstances, was well calculated to have filled us with horror; but in our natural solicitude to avoid the more immediate explosion, we endeavoured to cheer each other, as we stood up to our knees in water, with the hope that by these violent means we should be speedily restored to safety. The immense quantity of water that was thus introduced into the hold, had indeed the effect, for a time, of checking the fury of the flames; but the danger of sinking having increased as the risk of explosion was diminished, the ship became water-logged, and presented other indications of settling previous to her going down.

Death in two of its most awful forms now encompassed us, and we seemed left to choose the terrible alternative. But always preferring the more remote, though equally certain crisis, we tried to shut the ports again, to close the hatches, and to exclude the external air, in order, if possible, to prolong our existence, the near and

certain termination of which appeared inevitable.

The scene of horror that now presented itself baffles all description—

"Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell;
Then shriek'd the timid, and stood still the brave."

The upper deck was covered with between six and seven hundred human beings, many of whom, from previous sea-sickness, were forced, on the first alarm, to flee from below in a state of absolute nakedness, and were now running about in quest of husbands, children, or parents. While some were standing in silent resignation, or in stupid insensibility to their impending fate, others were yielding themselves up to the most frantic despair. Some on their knees were earnestly imploring, with significant gesticulations and in noisy supplications, the mercy of Him, whose arm they exclaimed, was at length outstretched to smite them; others were to be seen hastily crossing themselves, and performing the various external acts required by their peculiar persuasion; while a number of the older and more stout-hearted soldiers and sailors, sullenly took their seats directly over the magazine, hoping, as they stated, that by means of the ex-

plosion which they every instant expected, a speedier termination might thereby be put to their sufferings.* Several of the soldiers' wives and children, who had fled for temporary shelter into the after-cabins on the upper decks, were engaged in prayer and in reading the Scriptures with the ladies, some of whom were enabled, with wonderful self-possession, to offer to others those spiritual consolations, which a firm and intelligent trust in the Redeemer of the world appeared at this awful hour to impart to their own breasts. The dignified deportment of two young ladies in particular, formed a specimen of natural strength of mind, finely modified by Christian feeling, that failed not to attract the notice and admiration of every one who had an opportunity of witnessing it.

One young gentleman, of whose promising talents and piety I dare not now make further mention, having calmly asked me my opinion respecting the state of the ship, I told him that I thought we should be prepared to sleep that

* Captain Cobb, with great forethought, ordered the deck to be scuttled forward, with a view to draw the fire in that direction, knowing that between it and the magazine were several tiers of water casks; while he hoped that the wet sails, &c. thrown into the hold would prevent it from communicating with the spirit-room abaft.

night in eternity; and I shall never forget the peculiar fervor with which he replied, as he pressed my hand in his, "My heart is filled with the peace of God;" adding, "yet, though I know it is foolish, I dread exceedingly the last struggle."

Amongst the numerous objects that struck my observation at this period, I was much affected with the appearance and conduct of some of the dear children, who, quite unconscious in the cuddy cabins, of the perils that surrounded them, continued to play as usual with their little toys in bed, or to put the most innocent and unseasonable questions to those around them. To some of the older children, who seemed fully alive to the reality of the danger, I whispered, "Now is the time to put in practice the instructions you used to receive at the Regimental School, and to think of that Saviour of whom you have heard so much;" they replied, as the tears ran down their cheeks, "O Sir, we are trying to remember them, and we are praying to God."

The passive condition to which we were all reduced, by the total failure of our most strenuous exertions, while it was well calculated, and

probably designed to convince us afterwards, that our deliverance was effected, not "by our own might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord," afforded us ample room at the moment for deep and awful reflection, which, it is to be earnestly wished, may have been improved, as well by those who were eventually saved, as by those who perished.

It has been observed by the author of the "Retrospect," that "in the heat of battle, it is not only possible but easy to forget death, and cease to think; but in the cool and protracted hours of a shipwreck, where there is often nothing to engage the mind, but the recollection of tried and unsuccessful labors, and the sight of unavoidable and increasing harbingers of destruction, it is not easy nor possible to forget ourselves or a future state."

The general applicability of the latter part of this proposition, I am disposed to doubt; for if I were to judge of the feelings of all on board, by those of the number who were heard to express them, I should apprehend that a large majority of those men, whose previous attention has never been fairly and fully directed to the great subject of religion, approach the gates of

death, it may be, with solemnity, or with terror, but without any definable or tangible conviction of the fact that, "after death cometh the judgment."

Several there were, indeed, who vowed in loud and piteous cries, that if the Lord God would spare their lives, they would thenceforward dedicate all their powers to his service; and not a few were heard to exclaim, in the bitterness of remorse, that the judgments of the Most High were justly poured out upon them, for their neglected Sabbaths, and their profligate or profane lives; but the number of those was extremely small, who appeared to dwell either with lively hope or dread on the view of an opening eternity. And as a farther evidence of the truth of this observation, I may mention, that when I afterwards had occasion to mount the mizzen shrouds, I there met with a young man, who had brought me a letter of introduction from our excellent friend, Dr. G—n, to whom I felt it my duty, while we were rocking on the mast, quietly to propose the great question, "What must we do to be saved?" and this young gentleman has since informed Mr. P. that though he was at that moment fully persuaded

of the certainty of immediate death, yet the subject of eternity, in any form, had not once flashed upon his mind, previous to my conversation.

While we thus lay in a state of physical inertion, but with all our mental faculties in rapid and painful activity,—with the waves lashing furiously against the side of our devoted ship, as if in anger with the hostile element for not more speedily performing its office of destruction,—the binnacle, by one of those many lurches which were driving every thing moveable from side to side of the vessel, was suddenly wrenched from its fastenings, and all the apparatus of the compass dashed to pieces upon the deck; on which one of the young mates, emphatically regarding it for a moment, cried out with the emotion so natural to a sailor under such circumstances, "What! is the Kent's compass really gone?" leaving the by-standers to form, from that omen, their own conclusions. One promising young officer of the troops was seen thoughtfully removing from his writing-case a lock of hair, which he composedly deposited in his bosom; and another officer, procuring paper, &c. addressed a short communication to his father,

which was afterwards carefully enclosed in a bottle, in the hope that it might eventually reach its destination, with the view, as he stated, of relieving him from the long years of fruitless anxiety and suspense which our melancholy fate would awaken, and of bearing his humble testimony, at a moment when his sincerity could scarcely be questioned, to the faithfulness of that God in whose mercy he trusted, and whose peace he largely enjoyed in the tremendous prospect of immediate dissolution. It was at this appalling instant, when "all hope that we should be saved was now taken away," and when the letter referred to was about being committed to the waves, that it occurred to Mr. Thomson, the fourth mate, to send a man to the fore-top, rather with the ardent wish, than the expectation, that some friendly sail might be discovered on the face of the waters. The sailor, on mounting, threw his eyes round the horizon for a moment, —a moment of unutterable suspense,—and waving his hat exclaimed, "a sail on the lee bow!" The joyful announcement was received with deep-felt thanksgivings, and with three cheers upon deck. Our flags of distress were instantly hoisted, and our minute-guns fired; and we bore

down under our three top-sails and fore-sail upon the stranger, which afterwards proved to be the Cambria, a small brig of 200 tons burden—Cook—bound to Vera Cruz, having on board 20 or 30 Cornish miners, and other agents of the Anglo-Mexican Company.

For ten or fifteen minutes we were left in doubt whether the brig perceived our signals, or perceiving them, was disposed to lend us any assistance. From the violence of the gale, it seems, that the report of our guns was not heard; but the ascending volumes of smoke from our ship, sufficiently announced the dreadful nature of our distress; and we had the satisfaction, after a short period of dark suspense, to see the brig hoist British colors, and crowd all sail to hasten to our relief.

Although it was impossible, and would have been improper, to repress the rising hopes that were pretty generally diffused amongst us by the unexpected sight of the Cambria; yet I confess, that when I reflected on the long period our ship had been already burning—on the tremendous sea that was running—on the extreme smallness of the brig, and the immense number of human beings to be saved,—I could only venture to hope that a few might be spared; but I

durst not for a moment contemplate the possibility of my own preservation.

While Captain Cobb, Colonel Fearon, the commanding officer of the troops, and Major Macgregor of the 31st regiment, were consulting together, as the brig was approaching us, on the necessary preparations for getting out the boats, &c. one of the officers asked Major M. in what order it was intended the officers should move off; to which the other replied, "Of course, in funeral order;" which injunction was instantly confirmed by Col. Fearon, who said, "Most undoubtedly, the juniors first—but see that any man is cut down who presumes to enter the boats before the means of escape are presented to the women and children."

To prevent the rush to the boats, as they were being lowered, which, from certain symptoms of impatience manifested both by soldiers and sailors, there was reason to fear,—some of the military officers were stationed over them with drawn swords. But from the firm determination which these exhibited, and the great subordination observed, with few exceptions, by the troops, this proper precaution was afterwards rendered unnecessary.

Arrangements having been considerately made by Captain Cobb for placing in the first boat, previous to letting it down, all the ladies, and as many of the soldiers' wives as it could safely contain, they hurriedly wrapt themselves up in whatever articles of clothing could be most conveniently found; and I think about two, or half past two o'clock, a most mournful procession advanced from the after cabins to the starboard cuddy port, outside of which the cutter was suspended. Scarcely a word was uttered—not a scream was heard—even the infants ceased to cry, as if conscious of the unspoken and unspeakable anguish that was at that instant rending the hearts of their parting parents—nor was the silence of voices in any way broken, except in one or two cases, where the ladies plaintively entreated permission to be left behind with their husbands. But on being assured that every moment's delay might occasion the sacrifice of a human life, they successively suffered themselves to be torn from the tender embrace, and with the fortitude which never fails to characterize and adorn their sex on occasions of overwhelming trial, were placed, without a murmur, in the boat, which was immediately lowered into a sea

so tempestuous, as to leave us only "to hope against hope" that it should live in it for a single moment. Twice the cry was heard from those on the chains that the boat was swamping. But He, who enabled the apostle Peter to walk on the face of the deep, and was graciously attending to the silent but earnest aspirations of those on board, had decreed its safety. The tackle, after considerable difficulty, was unhooked—the boat was dexterously cleared from the ship, and after a while was seen from the poop, battling with the billows;—now raised, in its progress to the brig, like a speck on their summit, and then disappearing for several seconds, as if engulfed "in the horrid vale" between them.* The Cambria having prudently lain to at some distance from the Kent, lest she should be involved in her explosion, or exposed to the fire from our guns, which, being all shotted, afterwards went off, as the flames successively

* I was afterwards informed by one of the passengers on board the Cambria,—for, from the great height of the Indiaman, we had not the opportunity of making a similar observation,—that when both vessels happened to be at the same time in the trough of the sea, the Kent was entirely concealed by the intervening waves from the deck of the Cambria.

reached them, the men had a considerable way to row; and the success of this first experiment seeming to be the measure of future hopes, the movements of this precious boat—incalculably precious, without doubt, to the agonized husbands and fathers immediately connected with it,—were watched with intense anxiety by all on board. In the course of twenty minutes, it was seen alongside the "ark of refuge;" and the first human being that happened to be admitted, out of the vast assemblage that ultimately found shelter there, was the infant son of Major Macgregor, a child of only a few weeks old, who was caught from his mother's arms, and lifted into the brig by Mr. Thomson, the fourth mate of the Kent.

I have been told by one abundantly capable of judging, that the feelings of oppressive delight, gratitude, and praise, experienced by the married officers and soldiers, on being assured of the safety of their wives and children, so entirely abstracted their minds from their own situation, as to render them for a little while afterwards totally insensible either to the storm that beat upon them, or to the active and gathering vol-

cano that threatened every instant to explode under their feet.

It being impossible for the boats, after the first trip, to come alongside the Kent, a plan was adopted for lowering the women and children by ropes from the stern, by tying them two and two together. But from the heaving of the ship, and the extreme difficulty in dropping them at the instant the boat was underneath, many of the poor creatures were unavoidably plunged repeatedly under water; and much as humanity may rejoice that no woman was eventually lost by this process, yet it was as impossible to prevent, as it was deplorable to witness, the great sacrifice it occasioned of the younger children,—the same violent means which only reduced the parents to a state of exhaustion or insensibility, having entirely extinguished the vital spark in the feebler frames of the infants that were fastened to them.

Amid the conflicting feelings and dispositions manifested by the numerous actors in this melancholy drama, many affecting proofs were elicited of parental and filial affection, or of disinterested friendship, that seemed to shed a momentary halo around the gloomy scene.

Two or three soldiers, to relieve their wives of a part of their families, sprang into the water with their children, and perished in their endeavors to save them. One young lady, who had resolutely refused to quit her father, whose sense of duty kept him at his post, was near falling a sacrifice to her filial devotion, not having been picked up by those in the boats until she had sunk five or six times. Another individual, who was reduced to the frightful alternative of losing his wife or his children, hastily decided in favor of his duty to the former. His wife was accordingly saved, but his four children, alas! were left to perish. A fine fellow, a soldier, who had neither wife nor child of his own, but who evinced the greatest solicitude for the safety of those of others, insisted on having three children lashed to him, with whom he plunged into the water; not being able to reach the boat, he was again drawn into the ship with his charge, but not before two of the children had expired. One man fell down the hatchway into the flames, and another had his back so completely broken, as to have been observed quite doubled falling overboard. These numerous spectacles of individual loss and suffering were not confined to the

entrance upon the perilous voyage between the two ships. One man, who fell between the boat and brig, had his head literally crushed to pieces; and some others were lost in their attempts to ascend the side of the Cambria.

Seeing that the tardy means employed for the escape of the women and children, necessarily consumed a great deal of time that might be partly devoted to the general preservation, orders were given that along with the females, each of the boats should also admit a certain portion of the soldiers; several of whom, in their impatience to take advantage of this permission, flung themselves overboard, and sunk, in their ill-judged and premature efforts for deliverance.

One poor fellow of this number, a very respectable man, had actually reached the boat, and was raising his hand to lay hold on the gunnel, when the bow of the boat, by a sudden pitch, struck him on the head, and he instantly went down. There was a peculiarity attending this man's case that deserves notice. His wife, to whom he was warmly attached, not having been of the allotted number of women to accompany the regiment abroad, resolved, in her anxiety to follow her husband, to defeat this ar-

rangement, and accordingly repaired with the detachment to Gravesend, where she ingeniously managed, by eluding the vigilance of the sentries, to get on board, and conceal herself for several days; and although she was discovered, and sent ashore at Deal, she contrived, a second time, with true feminine perseverance, to get between decks, where she continued to secrete herself until the morning of the fatal disaster.

While the men were thus bent in various ways on self-preservation, one of the sailors, who had taken his post with many others over the magazine, awaiting with great patience the dreaded explosion, at last cried out, as if in ill humor that his expectation was likely to be disappointed, "Well! if she won't blow up, I'll see if I can't get away from her;" and instantly jumping up, he made the best of his way to one of the boats, which I understand he reached in safety.

I ought to state, that three out of the six boats we originally possessed, were either completely stove or swamped in the course of the day, one of them with men in it, some of whom were seen floating in the water for a moment before they disappeared; and it is suspected that

one or two of those who went down, must have sunk under the weight of their spoils, the same individuals having been seen eagerly plundering the cuddy cabins.

As the day was rapidly drawing to a close, and the flames were slowly, but perceptibly extending, Colonel Fearon and Captain Cobb evinced an increasing anxiety to relieve the remainder of the gallant men under their charge.

To facilitate this object, a rope was suspended from the extremity of the spanker boom, along which the men were recommended to proceed, and thence slide down by the rope into the boats. But as, from the great swell of the sea, and the constant heaving of the ship, it was impossible for the boats to preserve their station for a moment; those who adopted this course incurred so great a risk of swinging for some time in the air, and of being repeatedly plunged under water, or dashed against the sides of the boats underneath, that many of the landsmen continued to throw themselves out of the stern windows on the upper deck, preferring what appeared to me the more precarious chance of reaching the boats by swimming. Rafts made of spars, hen-coops, &c. were also ordered to be

constructed, for the twofold purpose of forming an intermediate communication with the boats, —a purpose, by the bye, which they very imperfectly answered,—and of serving as a last point of retreat, should the farther extension of the flames compel us to desert the vessel altogether.

The gradual removal of the officers was at the same time commenced, and was marked by a discipline the most rigid, and an intrepidity the most exemplary: none appearing to be influenced by a vain and ostentatious bravery, which, in cases of extreme peril, affords rather a presumptive proof of secret timidity than of fortitude; nor any betraying an unmanly or unsoldierlike impatience to quit the ship; but with the becoming deportment of men neither paralyzed by, nor stupidly insensible to, the accumulating dangers that encompassed them, they progressively departed in the different boats with their soldiers. They who happened to proceed first, leaving behind them an example of coolness, that could not be unprofitable to those who followed.

But the finest illustration of their conduct, was displayed in that of their chief, whose ability and invincible presence of mind, under the

complicated responsibility and anxiety of a commander, husband, and father, were eminently calculated, throughout this dismal day, to inspire all others with composure and fortitude. Never for a moment did Colonel Fearon seem to forget the authority with which his sovereign had invested him, nor did any of his officers—as far as my observation went—cease to remember the relative situations in which they were severally placed. Even in the gloomiest moments of that dark season, when the dissolution of every earthly distinction seemed near at hand, the decision and confidence with which orders were issued on the one hand, and the promptitude and respect with which they were obeyed on the other, afford the best proofs of the stability of the well connected system of discipline established in the 31st regiment,—and the most unquestionable ground for the high and flattering commendation which his Royal Highness the commander-in-chief has been pleased to bestow upon it.

I should, however, be guilty of injustice and unkindness, if I here omitted to bear my humble testimony to the manly behavior of the East India Company's cadets, and other private pas-

sengers on board, who emulated the best conduct of the officers of the ship and of the troops, and participated with them in all the hardships and exertions of the day.

As an agreeable proof too, of the subordination and good feeling that governed the poor soldiers in the midst of their sufferings, I ought to state, that towards evening, when the melancholy groups who were passively seated on the poop, exhausted by previous fatigue, anxiety, and fasting, were beginning to experience the pain of intolerable thirst, a box of oranges was accidentally discovered by some of the men, who, with a degree of mingled consideration, respect, and affection, that could hardly have been expected at such a moment, refused to partake of the grateful beverage until they had offered a share of it to their officers.

I regret that the circumstances under which I write, do not allow me sufficient time for recalling to my recollection all the busy thoughts that engaged my own mind on that eventful day, or the various conjectures which I ventured to form of what was passing in the minds of others.

But one idea, I remember, was forcibly sug-

gested to me,—that instead of being able to trace, amongst my numerous associates, that diversity of fortitude which I should have expected, *a priori*, would mark their conduct,—forming, as it were, a descending series, from the decided heroism exhibited by some, down to the lowest degree of pusillanimity and frenzy, discoverable in others,—I remarked that the mental condition of my fellow-sufferers was rather divided by a broad, but as it afterwards appeared, not impassable line; on the one side of which were ranged all whose minds were greatly elevated by the excitement above their ordinary standard; and on the other was to be seen the incalculably smaller, but more conspicuous group, whose powers of acting and thinking became absolutely paralyzed, or were driven into delirium, by the unusual character and pressure of the danger.

Nor was it uninteresting to observe the curious interchange, at least externally, of strength and weakness that obtained between those two discordant parties, during the day. Some, whose agitation and timidity had, in the earlier part of it, rendered them objects of pity or contempt, afterwards rose by some great internal effort, in-

to positive distinction for the opposite qualities; while others, remarkable at first for calmness and courage, suddenly giving way, without any fresh cause of despair, seemed afterwards to cast their minds as they did their bodies, prostrate before the danger.

It were not difficult, perhaps, to account for these apparent anomalies; but I shall content myself with simply stating the facts, adding to them one of a similar description that sensibly affected my own mind.

Some of the soldiers near me having casually remarked that the sun was setting, I looked round, and never can I forget the intensity with which I regarded his declining rays. I had previously felt deeply impressed with the conviction that that night the ocean was to be my bed; and had, I imagined, sufficiently realized to my mind, both the last struggles and the consequences of death. But as I continued solemnly watching the departing beams of the sun, the thought that that was really the very last I should ever behold, gradually expanded into reflections, the most tremendous in their import.—It was not, I am persuaded, either the retrospect of a most unprofitable life, or the direct fear of

death or of judgment, that occupied my mind at the period I allude to; but a broad, illimitable view of eternity itself, altogether abstracted from the misery or felicity that flows through it,—a sort of painless, pleasureless, sleepless eternity. I know not whither the overwhelming thought would have hurried me, had I not speedily seized, as with the grasp of death, on some of those sweet promises of the gospel, which give to an immortal existence its only charms; and that naturally enough led back my thoughts, by means of the brilliant object before me, to the contemplation of that "blessed city, which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

I have been the more particular in recording my precise feelings at the period in question, because they tend to confirm an opinion which I have long entertained,—in common, I believe, with yourself and others,—that we very rarely realize even those objects that seem, in our every day speculations, to be the most interesting to our hearts. We are so much in the habit of uttering the awful words—Almighty, heaven, hell, eternity, divine justice, holiness, &c. with-

out attaching to them, in all their magnitude, the ideas of which such words are the symbols, that we become overwhelmed with much of the astonishment that accompanies a new and alarming discovery, if, at any time, the ideas themselves are suddenly and forcibly impressed upon us; and it is probably this vagueness of conception, experienced even by those whose minds are not altogether unexercised on the subject of religion, that enables others, devoid of all reflection whatever, to stand on the very brink of that precipice, which divides the world of time from the regions of eternity, not only with apparent, but frequently, I am persuaded, with real tranquillity. How much is it to be lamented, that we do not keep in mind a truth which no one can pretend to dispute, that our indifference or blindness to danger, whether it be temporal or eternal, cannot possibly remove or diminish the extent of it.

Some time after the shades of night had enveloped us, I descended to the cuddy, in quest of a blanket to shelter me from the increasing cold; and the scene of desolation that there presented itself, was melancholy in the extreme. The place which, only a few short hours before,

had been the seat of kindly intercourse, and of social gaiety, was now entirely deserted, save by a few miserable wretches, who were either stretched in irrecoverable intoxication on the floor, or prowling about, like beasts of prey, in search of plunder. The sofas, drawers, and other articles of furniture, the due arrangement of which had cost so much thought and pains, were now broken into a thousand pieces, and scattered in confusion around me. Some of the geese and other poultry, escaped from their confinement, were cackling in the cuddy; while a solitary pig, wandering from its stye in the forecastle, was ranging at large in undisturbed possession of the Brussels carpet that covered one of the cabins. Glad to retire from a scene so cheerless and affecting, and rendered more dismal by the smoke which was oozing up from below, I returned to the poop, where I again found Captain Cobb, Colonel Fearon, and the few officers that remained, superintending with unabated zeal, the removal of the rapidly diminishing sufferers, as the boats successively arrived to carry them off.

The alarm and impatience of the people increased in a high ratio as the night advanced;

and our fears, amid the surrounding darkness, were fed as much by the groundless or exaggerated reports of the timid, as by the real and evident approach of the fatal crisis itself. With a view to ensure a greater probability of being discovered by those in the boats, some of the more collected and hardy soldiers (for I think almost all the sailors had already effected their escape,) took the precaution to tie towels and such like articles round their heads, previously to their committing themselves to the water.

As the boats were nearly three quarters of an hour absent between each trip, which period was necessarily spent by those in the wreck in a state of fearful inactivity,—abundant opportunity was afforded for collecting the sentiments of many of the unhappy men around me; some of whom, after remaining perhaps for a while in silent abstraction, would suddenly burst forth, as if awakened from some terrible dream, to a still more frightful reality, into a long train of loud and desponding lamentation, that gradually subsided into its former stillness.

It was during those trying intervals of rest, that religious instruction and consolation appeared to be the most required, and the most

acceptable. Some there were, accordingly, who endeavored to dispense it agreeably to the visible wants and feelings of the earnest hearers. On one of those occasions, especially, the officer to whom I have already alluded, was entreated to pray. His prayer was short, but was frequently broken by the exclamations of assent to some of its confessions, that were wrung from the afflicted hearts of his honest auditors.

I know not in what manner, under those circumstances, spiritual hope or comfort could have been ministered to my afflicted companions, by those who regard works, either wholly or partly, as the means of propitiating Divine Justice, rather than the evidence and fruits of that faith which pacifies the conscience and purifies the heart. But in some few cases, at least, where the individuals deplored the want of time for repentance and good works, I well remember that no arguments tended to soothe their troubled minds, but those which went directly to assure them of the freeness and fulness of that grace which is not refused, even in the eleventh hour, to the very chief of sinners. And if any of those to whom I now allude, have been spared to read this record of their feelings in the pros-

pect of death, it will be well for them to keep solemnly in mind the vows they then took upon them, and to seek to improve that season of probation which they so earnestly besought, and which has been so mercifully extended to them, —by humbly and incessantly applying for accessions of that faith which they are sensible removed the terrors of their awakened consciences, and can alone enable them henceforward to live in a sober, righteous, and godly manner,—and thereby give the only unquestionable proof of their love to God, and their interest in the great salvation of his Son Jesus Christ.

If, on reading this imperfect narrative, any persons beyond the immediate circle of my companions in misery, (for within it I can safely declare that there were no indications of ridicule,) should affect to despise, as contemptible or unsoldierlike, the humble devotional exercises to which I have now referred, I should like to assure them, that although they were undoubtedly commenced and prosecuted, much more with an eternal than a temporal object in view, yet they also subserved the important purpose of restoring order and composure amongst a certain limited class of the soldiers, at mo-

ments when mere military appeals had ceased to operate with their wonted influence.

I must state, that *in general*, it was not those most remarkable for their fortitude who evinced either a precipitancy to depart, or a desire to remain very long behind—the older and cooler soldiers appearing to possess too much regard for their officers, as well as for their individual credit, to take their hasty departure at a very early period of the day, and too much wisdom and resolution to hesitate to the very last.

But it was not till the close of this mournful tragedy that backwardness, rather than impatience, to adopt the perilous and only means of escape that offered, became generally discernible on the part of the unhappy remnant still on board ;—and that made it not only imperative on Captain Cobb to reiterate his threats, as well as his entreaties, that not an instant should be lost, but seemed to render it expedient for one of the officers of the troops, who had expressed his intention of remaining to the last, to limit, in the hearing of those around him, the period of his own stay. Seeing, however, between nine and ten o'clock, that some individuals were consuming the precious moments, by ob-

stinately hesitating to proceed, while others were making the inadmissible request to be lowered down as the women had been; learning from the boatmen that the wreck, which was already nine or ten feet below the ordinary water mark, had sunk two feet lower since their last trip; and calculating, besides, that the two boats under the stern, with that which was in sight on its return from the brig, would suffice for the conveyance of all who seemed in a condition to remove; the three remaining officers of the 31st regiment seriously prepared to take their departure.

As I cannot perhaps convey to you so correct an idea of the condition of others as by describing my own feelings and situation under the same circumstances, I shall make no apology for detailing the manner of my individual escape, which will sufficiently mark that of many hundreds that preceded it.

The spanker boom of so large a ship as the Kent, which projects, I should think, 16 or 18 feet over the stern, rests on ordinary occasions about 19 or 20 feet above the water; but in the position in which we were placed, from the great height of the sea, and consequent pitching of

the ship, it was frequently lifted to a height not less than 30 or 40 feet from the surface.

To reach the rope, therefore, that hung from its extremity, was an operation that seemed to require the aid of as much dexterity of hand as steadiness of head. For it was not only the nervousness of creeping along the boom itself, or the extreme difficulty of afterwards seizing on, and sliding down by the rope, that we had to dread, and that had occasioned the loss of some valuable lives, by deterring them from adopting this mode of escape; but as the boat, which one moment was probably close under the boom, might be carried the next, by the force of the waves, 15 or 20 yards away from it, the unhappy individual, whose best calculations were thus defeated, was generally left swinging for some time in mid-air, if he was not repeatedly plunged several feet under water, or dashed with dangerous violence against the sides of the returning boat—or, what not unfrequently happened, was forced to let go his hold of the rope altogether. As there seemed, however, no alternative, I did not hesitate, notwithstanding my comparative inexperience and awkwardness in such a situation, to throw my legs across the perilous stick; and

with a heart extremely grateful, that such means of deliverance, dangerous as they appeared, were still extended to me; and more grateful still that I had been enabled, in common with others, to discharge my honest duty to my sovereign and to my fellow-men;—I proceeded, after confidently committing my spirit, the great object of my solicitude, into the keeping of Him who had formed and redeemed it, to creep slowly forward, feeling at every step the increasing difficulty of my situation. On getting nearly to the end of the boom, the young officer whom I followed and myself were met with a squall of wind and rain, so violent as to make us fain to embrace closely the slippery stick, without attempting for some minutes to make any progress, and to excite our apprehension that we must relinquish all hope of reaching the rope. But our fears were disappointed: and after resting for a little while at the boom end, while my companion was descending to the boat, which he did not find until he had been plunged once or twice over head in the water, I prepared to follow; and instead of lowering myself, as many had imprudently done, at the moment when the boat was inclining towards us,—and consequently being

unable to descend the whole distance before it again receded,—I calculated that while the boat was retiring I ought to commence my descent, which would probably be completed by the time the returning wave brought it underneath; by which means I was almost the only officer or soldier who reached the boat without being either severely bruised or immersed in the water. But my friend Colonel Fearon had not been so fortunate; for after swinging for some time, and being repeatedly struck against the side of the boat, and at one time drawn completely under it, he was at last so utterly exhausted, that he must instantly have let go his hold of the rope and perished, had not some one in the boat seized him by the hair of the head and dragged him into it, almost senseless and dreadfully bruised.

Captain Cobb, in his immoveable resolution to be the last if possible to quit his ship, and in his generous anxiety for the preservation of every life intrusted to his charge, refused to seek the boat, until he again endeavored to urge onward the very few still around him, who seemed struck dumb and powerless with dismay. But finding all his entreaties fruitless, and hearing the guns, whose tackle was burst asunder by the

advancing flames, successively exploding in the hold into which they had fallen,—this gallant officer, after having nobly pursued, for the preservation of others, a course of exertion that has been rarely equalled either in its duration or difficulty, at last felt it right to provide for his own safety, by laying hold on the topping-lift, or rope that connects the driver-boom with the mizzen-top, and thereby getting over the heads of the infatuated men who occupied the boom, unable to go either backward or forward, and ultimately dropping himself into the water.

The means of escape, however, did not cease to be represented to the unfortunate individuals above referred to, long after Captain Cobb took his departure,—since one of the boats persevered in keeping its station under the Kent's stern, not only after all expostulation and entreaty with those on board had failed, but until the flames, bursting forth from the cabin windows, rendered it impossible to remain, without inflicting the greatest cruelty on the individuals that manned it. But even on the return of the boat in question to the Cambria, with the single soldier who availed himself of it, did Captain Cobb, with characteristic jealousy, refuse to

allow it to come alongside, until he learned that it was commanded by the spirited young officer, Mr. Thomson,* whose indefatigable exertions during the whole day, were to him a sufficient proof, that all had been done that could be done for the deliverance of those infatuated men. But the same beneficent Providence which had been so wonderfully exerted for the preservation of hundreds, was pleased, by a still more striking and unquestionable display of power and goodness, to avert the fate of a portion of those few who, we had all too much reason to fear, were doomed to destruction.

It would appear, for the poor men themselves give an extremely confused, though I am persuaded not a wilfully false, account of themselves, that shortly after the departure of the last boat, they were driven by the flames to seek shelter on the chains, where they stood until the masts fell overboard, to which they then clung for some hours, in a state of horror that no language can describe; until they were most providentially, I may say miraculously discovered and picked up, by the humane master (Bibbey)

* I ought to state that the exertions of Mr. Muir, 3d mate, were also most conspicuous during the whole day.

of the "Caroline," a vessel on its passage from Egypt to Liverpool, who happened to see the explosion at a great distance, and instantly made all sail in the direction whence it proceeded. Along with the fourteen men thus miraculously preserved were three others, who had expired before the arrival of the Caroline for their rescue.

The men on their return to their regiment expressed themselves in terms of the liveliest gratitude for the affectionate attentions they received on board the Caroline, from Captain Bibbey, who considerately remained till day-light close to the wreck, in the hope that some others might still be found clinging to it;—an act of humanity which, it will appear on the slightest reflection, would have been madness in Captain Cook, in the peculiar situation of the Cambria, to have attempted.

In reference to this last most melancholy portion of my narrative, I feel it extremely painful to be obliged to hazard an opinion, that if the whole crew of the Kent had put forth, from the beginning, the same generous and seamanlike efforts which several of them undoubtedly did, the few soldiers who were thus left behind would most probably have been safely disposed

of before the advance of the flames or their own terror had incapacitated them, in the manner I have endeavored to describe, from effecting their escape. But if, apart from this grievous consideration, I only recollect the lamentable state of exhaustion to which that portion of the crew were reduced, who unshrinkingly performed to the last their arduous and perilous duties,—and that out of the three boats that remained afloat, one was only prevented from sinking towards the close of the night, by having the hole in its bottom repeatedly stuffed with soldiers' jackets; while the other two were rendered inefficient, the one by having its bow completely stove, and the second by being half filled with water, and the thwarts so torn as to make it necessary to lash the oars to the boat's ribs,—I must believe that, independently of the counteracting circumstances formerly mentioned, all was done that humanity could possibly demand, or intrepidity effect, for the preservation of every individual.

Quitting, for a moment, the subject of the wreck, I would advert to what was in the mean time taking place on board the Cambria. I cannot, however, pretend to give you any adequate idea of the feelings of hope or despair, that al-

ternately flowed, like a tide, in the breasts of the unhappy females on board the brig, during the many hours of torturing suspense in which several of them were unavoidably held, respecting the fate of their husbands;—feelings which were inconceivably excited, rather than soothed, by the idle and erroneous rumors occasionally conveyed to them, regarding the state of the Kent. But still less can I attempt to portray the alternate pictures of awful joy, and of wild distraction, exhibited by the sufferers, (for both parties for the moment seemed equally to suffer,) as the terrible truth was communicated, that they and their children were indeed left husbandless and fatherless; or as the objects from whom they had feared they were forever severed, suddenly rushed into their arms.

But these feelings of delight, whatever may have been their intensity, were speedily chastened, and the attention of all arrested, by the last tremendous spectacle of destruction.

After the arrival of the last boat, the flames, which had spread along the upper deck and poop, ascended with the rapidity of lightning to the masts and rigging, forming one general conflagration, that illumined the heavens to an im-

mense distance, and was strongly reflected on several objects on board the brig. The flags of distress, hoisted in the morning, were seen for a considerable time waving amid the flames, until the masts to which they were suspended successively fell like stately steeples, over the ship's side. At last, about half-past one o'clock in the morning, the devouring element having communicated to the magazine, the long threatened explosion was seen, and the blazing fragments of the once magnificent Kent were instantly hurried, like so many rockets, high into the air; leaving, in the comparative darkness that succeeded, the deathful scene of that disastrous day floating before the mind like some feverish dream.*

Shortly afterwards the brig, which had been gradually making sail, was running at the rate of nine or ten miles an hour towards the nearest port. I would here endeavor to render my humble tribute of admiration and gratitude to that gallant and excellent individual who, under God, was undoubtedly the chief instrument of our deliverance,—if I were not sensible that testimony

* The brig was about three miles distant from the Kent at the period of its explosion.

has been already borne to his heroic and humane efforts, in a manner much more commensurate with, and from quarters reflecting infinitely greater honor upon, his merits, than the feeble expressions of them which I should be able to record. I shall therefore content myself with appending to this letter some of the gratifying testimonials to which I refer. But I trust you will keep in mind, that Captain Cook's generous intentions and exertions must have proved utterly unavailing for the preservation of so many lives, had they not been most nobly and unremittingly supported by those of his mate and crew, as well as of the numerous passengers on board his brig. While the former, only eight in number, were usefully and necessarily employed in working the vessel, the sturdy Cornish miners and Yorkshire smelters, on the approach of the different boats, took their perilous station on the chains, where they put forth the great muscular strength with which Heaven had endowed them, in dexterously seizing, at each successive heave of the sea, on some of the exhausted people and dragging them upon deck. Nor did their kind anxieties terminate there. They, and the gentlemen connected with them, cheerfully opened their

ample stores of clothes and provisions, which they liberally dispensed to the naked and famished sufferers;—they surrendered their beds to the helpless women and children, and seemed, in short, during the whole of our passage to England, to take no other delight than in ministering to all our wants.

Although, after the first burst of mutual gratulation, and of becoming acknowledgment of the Divine mercy, on account of our unlooked for deliverance, had subsided, none of us felt disposed to much interchange of thought, each being rather inclined to wrap himself up in his own reflections; yet we did not, during this first night, view with the alarm it warranted, the extreme misery and danger to which we were still exposed, by being crowded together, in a gale of wind, with upwards of 600 human beings, in a small brig of 200 tons, at a distance, too, of several hundred miles from any accessible port. Our little cabin, which was only calculated, under ordinary circumstances, for the accommodation of eight or ten persons, was now made to contain nearly eighty individuals, many of whom had no sitting-room, and even some of the ladies no room to lie down. Owing to the continued

violence of the gale, and to the bulwarks on one side of the brig having been driven in, the sea beat so incessantly over our deck, as to render it necessary that the hatches should only be lifted up between the returning waves, to prevent absolute suffocation below, where the men were so closely packed together, that the steam arising from their respiration excited at one time an apprehension that the vessel was on fire; while the impurity of the air they were inhaling became so marked that the lights occasionally carried down amongst them were almost instantly extinguished. Nor was the condition of the hundreds who covered the deck, less wretched than that of their comrades below; since they were obliged, night and day, to stand shivering, in their wet and nearly naked state, ancle deep in water:—some of the older children and females were thrown into fits, while the infants were pitifully crying for that nourishment which their nursing-mothers were no longer able to give them.*

* One of the soldiers' wives was delivered of a child about an hour or two after her arrival on board the brig. Both she and the child, who has since received the appropriate name of Cambria, are doing well.

Our only hope amid these great and accumulating miseries, was, that the same compassionate Providence which had already so marvellously interposed in our behalf, would not permit the wind to abate or change, until we reached some friendly port; for we were all convinced that a delay of a very few days longer at sea, must inevitably involve us in famine, pestilence, and a complication of the most dreadful evils.—Our hopes were not disappointed. The gale continued with even increasing violence; and our able captain, crowding all sail at the risk of carrying away his masts, so nobly urged his vessel onward, that in the afternoon of Thursday the 3d, the delightful exclamation from aloft was heard, "Land a-head!" In the evening we descried the Scilly lights; and running rapidly along the Cornish coast, we joyfully cast anchor in Falmouth harbor, about half-past twelve o'clock on the following morning.*

On reviewing the various proximate causes to which so many human beings owed their deliverance from a combination of dangers, as remarkable for their duration, as they were appalling in their aspect, it is impossible, I think,

* *i. e.* half an hour after midnight.

not to discover and gratefully acknowledge, in the beneficence of their arrangement, the overruling providence of that blessed Being, who is sometimes pleased, in his mysterious operations, to produce the same effects from causes apparently different; and on the other hand, as in our own case, to bring forth results the most opposite, from one and the same cause. For there is no doubt that the heavy rolling of our ship, occasioned by the violent gale, which was the real origin of all our disasters, contributed also most essentially to our subsequent preservation; since, had not Capt. Cobb been enabled, by the greatness of the swell, to introduce speedily through the gun-ports the immense quantity of water that inundated the hold, and thereby checked for so long a time the fury of the flames, the Kent must unquestionably have been consumed, before many, perhaps before any of those on board, could have found shelter in the Cambria.

But it is unnecessary to dwell on an insulated fact like this, amidst a concatenation of circumstances, all leading to the same conclusion, and so closely bound together as to force us to confess, that if a single link in the chain had been

withdrawn or withheld, we must all probably have perished.

The Cambria, which had been, it seems, unaccountably detained in port nearly a month after the period assigned for her departure, was, early on the morning of the fatal calamity, pursuing at a great distance a-head of us, the same course with ourselves; but her bulwarks on the weather side having been suddenly driven in, by a heavy sea breaking over her quarter, Captain Cook, in his anxiety to give ease to his laboring vessel, was induced to go completely out of his course, by throwing the brig on the opposite tack, by which means alone he was brought in sight of us. Not to dwell on the unexpected, but not unimportant facts, of the flames having been mercifully prevented, for eleven hours, from either communicating with the magazine forward,* or the great spirit-room abaft, or even coming into contact with the tiller-ropes,—any of which circumstances would evidently have blasted all our hopes,—I would remark, that until the Cambria hove in sight, we had not discovered any vessel whatever for several days

* The magazine, in many of the Indiamen, contrary, I believe, to the practice in ships of war, is under the forecastle.

previous; nor did we afterwards see another until we entered the chops of the channel. It is to be remembered too, that had the Cambria, with her small crew, been homeward instead of outward bound, her scanty remainder of provisions, under such circumstances, would hardly have sufficed to form a single meal for our vast assemblage; or if, instead of having her lower deck completely clear, she had been carrying out a full cargo, there would not have been time, under the pressure of the danger and the violence of the gale, to throw the cargo overboard, and certainly, with it, not sufficient space in the brig to contain one half of our number.

When I reflect, besides, on the disastrous consequences that must have followed, if, during our passage home, which was performed in a period most unusually short, the wind had either veered round a few points, or even partially subsided, which must have produced a scene of horror on board, more terrible if possible than that from which we had escaped;—and above all, when I recollect the extraordinary fact, and that which seems to have the most forcibly struck the whole of us, that we had not been above an hour in Falmouth harbor when the wind, which had all

along been blowing from the south-west, suddenly chopped round to the opposite quarter of the compass, and continued uninterruptedly for several days afterwards to blow strongly from the north-east;—one cannot help concluding, that he who sees nothing of a Divine Providence in our preservation, must be lamentably and wilfully blind "to the majesty of the Lord."

As little time as possible was lost, after our arrival at Falmouth, in reporting to Colonel Fenwick, the Lieutenant Governor of Pendennis Castle, the deplorable circumstances under which we had returned to port, and the urgent necessity there existed for our instant removal ashore; and with the tender sympathy which characterizes that old and distinguished officer, did he hasten, long before day-light, to take steps for the disembarkation and comfort of the troops and sailors. Capt. King, R. N., to whose kind anxieties and active exertions we had also much reason to feel indebted, as soon as our condition was communicated to him, called into immediate requisition the numerous boats at his disposal; and in the course of the morning, we all prepared, with thankful and joyful hearts, to replace our feet on the shores of old England.

The ladies, always destined to form our vanguard, were the first to disembark, and were met on the beach by immense crowds of the inhabitants who appeared to have been attracted thither less by idle curiosity, than from the sincerest desire to alleviate in every possible manner their manifest sufferings.

The sailors and soldiers, cold, wet, and almost naked, quickly followed; the whole forming, in their haggard looks and endless variety of their costume, an assemblage at once as melancholy and grotesque as it is possible to conceive. So eager did the people appear to be to po out upon us the full current of their sympathies, that shoes, hats, and other articles of urgent necessity, were presented to several of the officers and men, before they had even quitted the point of disembarkation. And in the course of the day, many of the officers and soldiers, and almost all the females, were partaking, in the private houses of individuals, of the most liberal and needful hospitality.

But this flow of compassion and kindness did not cease with the impulse of the more immediate occasion that had called it forth. For a meeting of the inhabitants was afterwards held,

where subscriptions in clothes and money to a large amount, were collected for the relief of the numerous sufferers. The women and children, whose wants seemed to demand their first care, were speedily furnished with comfortable clothing, and the poor widows and orphans with decent mourning. Depositories of shirts, shoes, stockings, &c. were formed for the supply of the officers and private passengers; and the sick and wounded* in the hospital, were made the recipients, not only of all those kindly attentions, and medical assistance, that could tend to remove or soothe their temporal suffering, but were also invited to partake freely of the most judicious spiritual consolation and instruction. This uninterrupted march of charity was conducted by the ladies of Falmouth, who were zealously accompanied on it, by the whole body, in the vicinity, of that peculiar sect of Christians, who have ever been as remarkable for their unassuming pretensions and consistent conduct, as for unostentatiously standing in the front ranks of every good work. And so strong is the rea-

* Many of the officers and men were severely bruised, in the course of their exertions on board the Kent, or in endeavoring to effect their escape.

son which I, in particular, have to associate in my mind, all that is sincere, considerate, and charitable, with the Society of Friends, that the very badge of Quakerism will, I trust, henceforward prove a sufficient passport to the best feelings of my heart.

On the first Sunday after our arrival, Colonel Fearon, followed by all his officers and men, accompanied by Captain Cobb, and the officers and private passengers of his late ship, hastened to prostrate themselves before the throne of the heavenly grace, to pour out the public expression of their thanksgiving to their Almighty Preserver. The scene was deeply impressive; and it is earnestly to be hoped, that many a poor fellow who listened, perhaps for the first time in his life with unquestionable sincerity and humility to the voice of instruction, will be found steadily prosecuting, in the strength of God, the good resolutions that he may on that solemn occasion have formed, until he be able to say, as one of the greatest Generals of antiquity did, "that it was good for him to have been afflicted, for before he was afflicted he went astray, but that afterwards he was not ashamed to keep God's word."

In the course of a few days, the private pas-

sengers and most of the sailors of our party, were dispersed in various directions: such of the crew of the Kent as had not, by their previously inhumane and insubordinate conduct, forfeited all claim to the slightest indulgence, having received from the proverbial liberality of Captain Cobb, a sufficient sum to bear their expenses to their respective homes. And the troops, after having incurred to the excellent inhabitants of Falmouth and the adjacent towns, a debt of gratitude which none of them can ever hope to repay, were embarked on the 13th for Chatham; where they are at present enjoying, through the kind consideration and sympathy of his Royal Highness the commander-in-chief, that degree of relaxation and quiet, of which they seem so much to stand in need, previously to their proceeding to their ulterior destination.

Notwithstanding the unexpected length to which I have already extended this little narrative, I cannot allow myself to close it without offering to my late companions on board the Kent, into whose hands it may possibly fall, should you see meet to publish it, a few very plain and simple observations, which I think worthy of their serious consideration, and the

importance of which I desire to have deeply impressed upon my own mind. None of those soldiers who were in the habit of reading their Bibles can have failed to notice that faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is therein made the great pivot on which the salvation of man hinges; that the whole human race, without distinction of rank, nation, age, or sex, being justly exposed to the wrath of Almighty God, nothing but the precious blood of Christ which was shed on the cross, can possibly atone for their sins; and that faith in this atonement can alone pacify the conscience, and awaken confidence towards God as a reconciled Father. If, therefore, "he that believeth in Christ shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," be the unequivocal language of Jehovah, either expressly declared, or obviously implied in every page of that record which he has vouchsafed to us of his Son; is it not a question of the deepest concernment to every one professing any regard for divine revelation, whether he really understands and believes that record, or whether he is able to give, not only to others, but to himself, a reason of this hope that is in him?

From the influence of education or example,

the absence of serious reflection, an attention to the outward ordinances of religion, a regard to many of the proprieties and decencies of life, and a forgetfulness that the religion of the Bible is a religion of motives rather than one of observances,—minds easily satisfied on such subjects may persuade themselves that they are spiritually alive while they are dead,—that they are amongst the sincere disciples of the blessed Redeemer, and fully interested in his salvation, while they may have neither part nor lot in the matter. But if, at the hour of death, when all external support shall slide away, the soul should be awakened to the consciousness of its real condition; if it should be made to see, on the one hand, the spirituality and exceeding breadth of the divine law, and be quickened, on the other, to a sense of its unnumbered transgressions; if the mercy of God out of Christ, in which so many vainly and vaguely trust, should become obscured by the inflexible justice and spotless holiness of his character; and if the solitary spirit, as it is dragged towards the mysterious precipice, is made to hear, from a voice which it can no longer mistake, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written

in the law to do them,"—how unspeakably miserable must be the condition of the man who thus discovers, for the first time, that the sand which he had all his life-time been mistaking for the "Rock of Ages," is now giving way under his feet, and that his soul must speedily sink into that state where "the tree forever lieth as it falleth;" where "he that is unjust must be unjust still; he that is unholy, unholy still;" and where there is "no work, nor device, nor knowledge," nor repentance.

But that I may not be misunderstood, or be supposed to favor principles of barren speculation, more delusive and dangerons to their possessors, and to the best interests of society, than absolute ignorance itself,—I would remind the gallant men to whom I am now more especially addressing myself, that "that faith which saves the soul," not only "worketh" invariably "by love," and gradually "overcometh the world," but that "it is the gift of God," implanted in the heart by his Holy Spirit, even by that Spirit which is freely given to every one that earnestly asketh. And however unable the simple soldier may be to explain either the nature or the manner of its operation, he must not deceive

himself into the persuasion that he is possessed of this precious grace, unless he feels it bringing forth in his life and conversation the abundant fruits that necessarily spring from it, and that cannot indeed be produced without it. He will be zealous and stead in the performance of duty, patient under fatigue and privation, sober amid temptations, calm but firm in the hour of danger, and respectfully obedient to his officers; he will honor his king, be content with his wages, and do harm to no man. His piety will be ardent, but sober; his prayers will be earnest and frequent, but rather in secret than before men; he will not be contentious or disputatious, but rather desirous of instructing others by his example than by his precepts; making his light so shine before them, in the simplicity of his motives, the uprightness of his actions, in his readiness to oblige, and by the whole tenor of his life, that they seeing his good works, may be led, by the Divine blessing, to acknowledge the reality, and power, and beauty of religion, and be induced in like manner to glorify his heavenly Father. In short, in comparison with his thoughtless comrades, he must not only aspire to become a better man, but

from the constraining motives of the gospel, struggle to be also in every essential respect a better soldier.

In conclusion, I would observe, that if any class of men, more than another, ought to be struck with awe and gratitude by the goodness and providence of God, it is they who go down to the sea in ships, and see his wonders in the great deep; or if any ought to familiarize their minds with death, and its solemn consequences, it is surely soldiers, "whose very business it is to die." May all those then, especially, who lately possessed the privilege, but rarely granted, of being allowed, in the full vigor of health, and in the absence of all the bustle and excitement of battle, to contemplate, from the very brink of eternity, the awful realities that reign within it, as many of their departing comrades were hurried through its dreaded portals, be now led, in the respite which has been given them, to remember that this alone is the accepted time, and this the day of salvation; for while some may defer the subject "to a more convenient season," the message may come forth, as it lately did, at an hour when it is least expected, "This night thy soul is required of thee."

Lost in the Destruction of the Kent.

54 soldiers, 1 woman, and 20 children, belonging to the 31st regiment,—1 seaman and 5 boys—total 81 individuals.

PSALM.

Thy works of glory, mighty Lord,
Thy wonders in the deeps,
The sons of courage shall record,
Who trade in floating ships.

At thy command the winds arise,
And swell the tow'ring waves ;
The men astonish'd mount the skies,
And sink in gaping graves.

Again they climb the wat'ry hills,
And plunge in deeps again ;
Each like a tott'ring drunkard reels,
And finds his courage vain.

Frighted to hear the tempest roar,
They pant with fluttering breath,
And hopeless of the distant shore,
Expect immediate death.

Then to the Lord they raise their cries,
He hears their loud request,
And orders silence through the skies,
And lays the floods to rest.

Sailors rejoice to lose their fears,
And see the storm allay'd :
Now to their eyes the port appears ;
There let their vows be paid.

Tis God that brings them safe to land ;
Let thoughtless mortals know,
That waves are under his command,
And all the winds that blow.

Oh that the sons of men would praise
The goodness of the Lord !
And those that see thy wondrous ways,
Thy wondrous love record !

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